

A. Gussard

May 16, 1954

This is a lovely Spring Sunday, and I write this to you sitting under the apple tree just now in blossom in our garden. This is some indication of the lateness of our season.

Have I not acknowledged your past message, and your check? Of course, I deposited it as soon as it was received, and remitted your dues immediately to the Society of Immunologists with a brief explanation. I am surprised you have had no response from them. Is there any chance your mail is entangled between Paris and the Gardes Annex of the Institut Pasteur? I have in trust the balance of the check and await your instructions at any time.

Thank you for the catalogs, received about two weeks ago. I have looked through them briefly, not enough to ask for any definite purchases, but am delighted to have those lists. I was surprised to find books as expensive as they were. The French titles seem relatively more expensive (in \$) than do English, about as much as American and Swiss.

I wish you could be here to enjoy the television and radio broadcasts of the McCarthy--Army hearings. Or do you get some of these. We listen to them regularly while working in the lab. Joe's stock has never been lower, and I think it not merely wishful thinking that McCarthy himself is finished except as a spokesman for the most extreme lunatic fringe. But I fear that McCarthyism may be as vigorous as ever, though there seems to be a strong public reaction to these hearings and the procedures may still be improved. On the other hand, we now learn that some federal agencies are screening the scientists who receive research grants, and revoking them (without notice or hearing) on the basis of "derogatory information". There has been a very strong protest to the National Institute of Health (Public Health Service) about this from the National Academy of Sciences and from its president, Detlev Bronk (who was President of Johns Hopkins University and is now Director of the Rockefeller Institute). Since this agency did help resolve the trouble with Dr. Astin at the Bureau of Standards, something may yet come of the protest. But this is one reason why I regret the increasing socialization of science, i.e., its increasing dependence on government support, though this seems inevitable as science becomes a bigger and bigger business under the leadership of some of our colleagues.

It is hard for me to ^{over}underestimate the importance of Indo-China-- there must be developed some program of real international collective action (not like Korea) to keep the balance on our side. French policy there does not seem to have been particularly responsive to U.S. urging until the last few months of the desperate military situation. Can we afford to abandon S.E. Asia to the Communists-- or is it far too late to convince the Vietnamese that their national aspirations are more surely doomed under the reds than the tricolor?

Give Jacques our best. He did deliver the lovely impression print-- did you call that "estampage"-- but not the catalog description of it. (I am also looking forward to an autographed copy of deFonbrune's manual that he promised: I spend almost ~~all~~ all my lab time now with his instrument-- did Jacques mention to you about the Salmonella "semiclones"? But the most exciting ~~of~~ recent development is the visualization of bacterial conjugation in E. coli, for which a small trick was needed: if one uses one motile and one non-motile parent, however, the conjoined pairs are easily found by virtue of their erratic pattern of movement. Many of these have been isolated with the micromanipulator, and the majority of pairs that have been handled gently and survive, have engendered recombinants. The details of the "mating" are just being worked out: for some long interval, the paired cells are joined by an invisible connection that can be stretched to as much as 1 - 2 microns, but remaining constant in position. There seem to be quite

enough pairs to account for the incidence of recombination. Other than that the conjugants and exconjugants seem remarkably fragile, and will usually die if prematurely separated, there is little more to say. In several instances both mating parents have survived conjugation and separation (after 1 - 2 hours

Yours sincerely,

Joshua

Joshua Lederberg

F.S. You may receive soon a magazine issue ("Progressive") dealing with McCarthy. Also, to change the subject, McShan has been married and is reputed well enough pleased. He has proved to be quite a vehement anti-McCarthyite.